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Quality of Livestock Products

237 Livestock products already play an important role in the economy. Demand for such products may well rise with the anticipated increase in the purchasing power of the population. With it will come an insistence on the improvement of quality which is now often very low. Better quality would also substantially raise the prices of export products.

Hides and Skins

281 Although there are a few modern plants, many tanneries are still extremely primitive and produce a poorly finished product. Their chief handicap, however, is the low quality of the hides they receive. Methods of flaying and preserving are generally poor. Even in the abattoirs which are supervised by the Veterinary Department the quality of the product leaves much to be desired. The prevailing methods of flaying—with the knife in the case of sheep and cattle, and with the axe in the case of buffalo—leave the hide lacerated, with hair, meat and blood adhering to the inside. Methods of preservation are also inadequate. Hides and skins collected outside of the abattoirs and many of those taken from the abattoirs are frequently improperly prepared to ensure keeping quality during storage and transportation until the time of their arrival at the tannery. The low-paid and poorly trained supervisors which the Veterinary Department assigns to the abattoirs are incapable of effecting any improvement.

In view of these conditions it would be advisable to appoint an experienced abattoir specialist to teach and direct the abattoir supervisors. The teaching could be done in the Veterinary School at Baghdad, with practical demonstrations at the Baghdad abattoir. Once an adequate number of supervisors are trained, the School might conduct simple courses for the abattoir workers themselves. This scheme of training could later be extended to village slaughterers.

The Hides and Skins Association established by a law enacted in 1951 affords another opportunity to raise the standards of the trade and industry. It is suggested that an experienced foreign expert be appointed to manage the Association in the initial period and establish its reputation as a constructive and modernizing

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382 387 reliable foreign chemical firm can be secured to design and construct it and, at least at the outset, operate it under a management contract.

The plant would give permanent employment to about 1,000 workers.

387 237 ***Bone Meal Plants***

Another promising field for new industry is the conversion of the waste products from abattoirs to fertilizers for domestic use. Bone meal, for example, is a very valuable fertilizer. Yet at present Iraq, with no domestic plant to utilize them, is exporting approximately 15,000 tons of bones per year to Europe.

There would probably be sufficient demand for fertilizer to support three plants, located at Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. Their combined cost would probably amount to roughly ID 50,000, of which ID 45,000 would be in foreign exchange, principally pounds sterling. With help from the Industrial Bank, this could probably be financed by the abattoir owners. When completed the plants would give employment to about 60 workers.

Steel

327 Iraq is now producing about 5,000 tons of steel scrap per year. It is recommended that a small hand-operated mill and electric melting furnace be set up to convert this scrap into reinforcing bars, window shapes and small angles, all of which are in great demand. This mill ought to be located in Baghdad and arrangements made to obtain off-peak power from the Baghdad power plant or from the railroad shops. As an alternative to electric melting, crucibles might be considered. In either case, the cost of the plant would be approximately ID 300,000, including ID 200,000 in foreign exchange, mostly in hard currency. This mill could not satisfy the whole of Iraq's steel needs; nevertheless, it would furnish about 5,000 tons per year of certain types at probably half the cost of the imported steel it would replace.

The mill could be financed by private capital with help from the Industrial Bank. Foreign technicians would be required dur-